

KILL THE BILL PROTEST ATTENDANCE HINDERED BY POLICE PRESENCE, ORGANISER SAYS



^ An organiser addresses attendees that showed up to a Kingston kill the bill protest despite police warnings.

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Organisers of a Kill the Bill demonstration on Saturday blamed police tactics for a significantly lower turn-out than expected. The protest, organised by three Kingston residents, was held despite lockdown regulations to spread awareness about Priti Patel's Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill, as well as honour the victims of police brutality in the UK.

While the social media post advertising the demonstration received 356 likes on Instagram, only around 50 attended the event. One organiser, who wishes to remain anonymous, blamed a Facebook post made by the Kingston Police for the low attendance the event had.

“The rights to protest must be balanced against the rights of others and the protection of public health... Those gathering will be encouraged to return home, if they do not, they face necessary and proportionate enforcement action. This could be a fixed penalty notice, or arrest,” the post reads.

Before the protest started, one organiser addressed the small crowd, thanking them for attending in face of the scare tactics used by the police. After marching 15 minutes to a nearby field, dozens of Kingston Police appeared at the scene and gathered behind the sitting protesters. Meanwhile, two liaison officers approached each household, urging them to leave, claiming they were recording every person.

As a result, some left the demonstration early on, fearful of a fine or imprisonment.

Displeased with the turn-out, the organiser stated: “I was hoping there would be more people there... but I do think the police did their job at scaring people away.”

Vinnie Conquest, a 17 year-old speaker at the rally, labelled the actions of the police to deter attendees as “sickening but not surprising”.

“It just showed how sickening some of the cop’s scare tactics are... people have to see that we are angry and our movement is not going away.”

An experienced protester and worker for the Socialist Worker Party, Chris Rooney, 69, added: “The police have always been the enemy. They can say whatever they like to me, I take no notice of them, it’s not going to do me any favours.”

Regardless of the low attendance, the three organisers hope to host another kill the bill demonstration in the near future, and have publicly supported one in nearby Guildford on the 4th of April.

The bill, if made law, will heavily regulate how protests of any size can be policed. The police will gain powers like imposing start and end times to protests as well as setting noise limits and determining the routes of marches.

The MPS Kingston have been contacted for comment.